

EMANATIONS



OF THE EGO!

Authority and Anarchy

by F. Walker

Anarchism is fundamentally a philosophy of individualism or egoism. The essential ideas involved in this philosophy may be derived from the naturalistic theory of man's creation and development. Assuming that man is nothing more nor less than a particular manifestation of natural phenomena, rather than a creature created by some supernatural power or god, we can say immediately that he has no superimposed purpose or objective to fulfill. This idea can be substantiated by saying that the "purpose" is only an idea and, as such, can only exist in a conscious being. Not being aware of any form of conscious being other than ourselves – a disbelief in god, in other words – it follows that the idea of purpose can only exist in the mind of man and could not have existed before he came into being. Having no external or imposed objective then, man is left to choose one of his own.

Now the logical biological choice of a motive will be the satisfaction of the normal physical and mental appetites and desires. The objection that this idea places man on the same level as the beast may be met with the following argument. It is assumed that, for some reason, a man should be good, generous, honorable, altruistic, etc. It may be pointed out then that our conceptions of "right", "good", "true", etc., are largely determined by our desires. We call those things "good" that can be used to satisfy our balanced desires, those ideas "true" which leave us mentally satisfied and vice-versa. With this conception of desire, which is a combination of the mental as well as the physical appetites, we find it can be applied to every aspect of life. Even our emotions are usually experienced in the form of an intense desire. The intelligent man will weigh and evaluate his desires and select those which afford the greatest amount of satisfaction as the ones that shall constitute his purpose in life.

The next step is where he encounters difficulties. He tries to apply these principles to living and finds himself surrounded by man-created obstacles that prevent, or at least hinder him, from achieving his purpose. Living in a world filled with other men it is necessary for him to live as they live and as a result he finds his activities limited to the accepted emotions of the time. That there is an unnecessary amount of hardships and misery needs no proof. He is forced to share these undesirable conditions – at least mentally if not physically. The Anarchist seeks a solution to this tragically ridiculous situation.

He finds a solution in the thought that man has allowed himself to become the slave of various ideas, which bring about a condition that prevents him from reaching the only logical goal he can have. The conclusion is reached by reasoning that the form of the social structure takes its shape from the ideas that are held by those within the structure. Customs and institutions exist only

because they are supported by people. People only support those things which they are convinced are good or necessary. Hence the fundamental factor in any social institution or custom is the idea which makes that condition possible. Obviously then, if a condition exists that is not desirable its cause may be traced to a prevailing idea. Let us examine some of these ideas.

Perhaps the most vicious of these enslaving ideas is that of authority. It has its roots in religious concepts, where man has long been trained to serve the whims and desires of a god that exists only as an idea, instead of serving his own needs and appetites. The idea of authority, or the idea that one must serve another without choice, fosters the idea of privilege; since once authority has been established, it is only natural for those who have it to use this power for their own benefit. Privilege means that some men must cater to the desires of those who are "privileged", rather than to their own – as was the case where man worshipped the idea of god. Now the Anarchist condemns these ideas of authority and privilege on the basis of his original postulate – that is, the natural, free and equal origin of all men.

Why any man should have the privilege of using any other man's life and labor to satisfy his desires is beyond the comprehension of the Anarchist. He can only conclude that such a state of affairs exists because those who serve do so as result of their worship of the ideas of authority and privilege. They have been trained to believe that these ideas are right and good and that, for their own welfare, they must suppress their own desires and serve instead these god-ideas. He decides then, that man's social difficulties are directly traceable to his indisposition to evaluate his ideas on a logically egoistic basis rather than on a basis of tradition and custom. He believes that if man would accept the responsibility of arriving at his own conclusions, instead of accepting, without analysis, those ideas that are handed down to him by tradition and those that are handed out to him by those who would like him to serve them, the ideas of authority and privilege would disappear. This because all men are, by nature, egoists and would naturally choose only those that give them the freedom necessary to satisfy their desires.

This constitutes the foundation of the Anarchistic philosophy. An Anarchist is simply a man who wants to do what he wants to do, rather than one who allows himself to believe that there is some mystical reason why he ought to submit to the desires of others. He is one who believes that his desires are his only reason for living and that unless he has the liberty and freedom to abide by them life is meaningless and of no value.

We come now to the principle problem of transforming the social system from one that is desirable for the few to one that is logical for the many. The relationship between ideas and the form of the social structure has already been discussed. The task to be accomplished then, consists of breaking down

the popular faith in those ideas that are restraining man from living in a reasoned manner. Or, to be precise, to induce all men to think for themselves in place of depending on either custom or authority to evaluate their ideas for them. The revolution that the Anarchist looks forward to is, primarily, a revolution that will take place in the minds of men. His fight is fundamentally a process of education.

His logical point of attack will be against those institutions that are dependent upon, and hence strive to maintain, those ideas that are contrary to man's natural desires, namely authority and privilege. He sees government as the most important of these institutions. Every form of government is an authoritarian institution that enforces its edicts with power. The individual, then, must abide by its laws – he has no choice in the matter. The situation contradicts the first principle of Anarchism, namely that the idea of authority is contrary to the idea of freedom, which is the essential factor in the achievement of man's purpose. For this reason the Anarchist condemns the idea of government.

He also has other reasons for this attitude. The principal function of government is to make and enforce laws for the protection of private property. This leads directly to the existence of a privileged class since it protects those who “own” and control the vital resources of the world. With this protected control, these “owners” are in a position to force all other men to work for their benefit. This is obviously out of harmony with the ideas of the Anarchist. He sees government as an institution that makes property, hence privilege, possible. Without government privilege could not exist since no man would willingly tolerate it. With government he is forced to submit to the protected power of the privileged owners.

The Anarchist then, employs every available method to break down the faith that people have in the idea that government is either desirable or necessary. He reasons that once the worship of the idea of authority – and its offspring, privilege – has been abandoned, man will have no deity to serve other than himself. He will have evolved from a tool to a being – from a slave to a man.

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Egoism

by James L. Walker

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I thank John F. Kelly for his labor and thought on "Morality and its Origin." His first paragraph contains two good Egoistic expressions. He is saying and doing of his own desire what some would persuade us not to expect except from a sense of obligation or duty.

To my understanding there is no inconsistency in my articles. Language is algebraical, and ideas of right can be resolved into ideas of power, capacity, and need, and these into the things in which, for the process of reasoning, power is assumed to inhere. It is noticeable that among the people the idea of right is giving place to that of ability. I am glad Mr. Kelly has seen Stirner's book. If he has read it very carefully and with a perfectly open mind, I wonder that he still requires any definition of Egoism. If Stirner said hard things of right and truth, he also said that man is a phantom. This should challenge careful reading. Egoism deals with facts, breaks and dissolves the dominion of ideas, and does not propose to reestablish it in definitions and doctrines. Things can be perceived and named; motives, actions, and consequences appreciated and described. Observe in the following quotation how Stirner uses the word truth in its real sense:

The discoverer of a great truth well knows that it may be useful to other men, and, as a greedy withholding would bring him no enjoyment, he communicates it.—Der Einzige und sein Eigentum, p. 136.

Here I may introduce a sentence from page 130 on progress:

The men of future generations will yet win many a liberty of which we do not even feel the want.

Certainly the abstract idea of right is in opposition to that of might. Force is real and, in many forms, independent of sensation and sentiment. Therefore it is said that might transcends right. A declaration of rights is often the pitiful expression of a lack of power. Just now a report says that a speaker at Chicago declared they had a right to overthrow society by force. I call that idea a foolish phantasy, the abstract, fixed, fanatical idea of right severed from circumstances which determine abilities. The devotee of the fixed idea is mad. He either runs amuck, or cowers as mesmerized by the idea. The New York "Standard" says of the rich: "It is no excuse for them that the poor would do the same thing." Say rather it is only an excuse. Moralists labor in

long discussions of such excuses. Egoism would render such excuses impotent and such a line of discussion unnecessary. M. Harman of Kansas has suggested going on unoccupied land and fighting it out there, because the abstract right appears, though the fight would be a losing one: idiocy produced by the fixation of the idea, or a foolish phantasy. The same remark for the "Truth Seeker's" suggestion to Henry Appleton that, if one objects to taxation, one "ought" not to walk on pavement laid with means derived from taxation. The same for punctilios about oath-taking, about telling the truth under all circumstances, about keeping promises because they are promises, — a weakness which delays the dissipation of that intrusive despotism which alone desires to fortify itself by exacting promises. By action showing quiet contempt for undesired fancied duties to ideas and "principles," the principal himself, Ego, reduces bigotry and all tyranny to despair, and compels the importunate to desist from what they soon discover to be useless. Egoism has many practical suggestions for people in business, love, and other relations, and especially for the Anarchistic propaganda.

The intellect which has physical forces at command sometimes crushes the idealist; then what becomes of the ideas which were in his brain? The utilitarian definition of right has its meaning in that course of conduct which a utilitarian association finds desirable for itself; but, when an individual attempts to judge what is best for everybody, he is apt to make mistakes, and when he sacrifices his own welfare to an idea of the general welfare, he may see shrewder individuals profiting by his error; and, though the moralist may pronounce his conduct admirable, the result is not happy. Egoism helps the utilitarians and all others to comprehend the logic of the existence of bodies. Each body makes its declarations of what it wants as if it were an Ego. If the persons composing it are not real Egos, they will probably take the reason of the association for **their** reason and sacrifice themselves in circumstances where conditions are not reciprocal, or as assumed in the theory. But the real Ego has a sure rule in himself for himself. Each person is a fact.

The man who wrings from another the fruit of his labor excites me to hostility by this wringing, or wrong, because I will not suffer it if I can help it; but my suffering is not a contest between a moral principle and my own self, but the result of an offence to myself, an obstacle to the realization of my desire.

A theologian, a moralist, and myself condemn rape, and will try to prevent it. The first says that he bases his action upon the law of God, which he obeys. The second says that he bases his action upon a moral law, which he obeys. These are ideas of duty. The theologian cannot conceive that he would be moved to prevention without the law of God; hence he distrusts the moralist as having only a shadowy sanction to control him. The moralist smiles contemptuously at the obtuseness of the theologian, but suffers from his bigotry. Then the moralist turns upon me and treats me as the theologian treated him.

My natural inclinations are “not sufficient restraint,” he thinks, and so forth, and not sufficient incitement to do well. But really I am well, when I am whole, and holiness is but a fantastic image, made by ignorance, of wholeness. And when I am well, I shall want to do well. The first two may preach duty to the rapist! Suppose they succeed in restraining him by that influence. It must be so powerful, if it overcomes his will, as to make him subject to indoctrination in general. If to the views of the theologian, then he is ready for religious fanaticism, and — misery of parodies — the very same authority will teach him, now subject to its doctrines, that with religious sanction he may bind a woman to himself in marriage and commit rape upon her person as often as he likes. Moralism offers no better “guarantee,” none whatever in fact. To dominate and control the man it must have an influence over him which, after restraining him from committing the offence in question, will fit him to commit any offence against persons when the moral idea, the greatest good of humanity, dictates it. Filled with the idea that he is a vessel of humanity devoted to the welfare of the “social organism,” what guarantee is there that he will not become the instrument of Huxley in extirpating Anarchists as carbuncles upon the said organism? What guarantee can there be that the moralized rapist will not, by force of the very idea to which he surrendered, — the idea, namely, of **duty** to the social organism, — become persuaded that the social organism needs scientific culture at the root as well as the pruning already mentioned, and that consequently in the cause of humanitarian science it may become his duty to commit a number of scientific rapes upon a number of women, whose Egoism, however, is detestably refractory to the sacrifice demanded by the general welfare. The dog returns to his vomit. My simple Egoism may not furnish abstruse arguments against rape, but it will not furnish the respect which now maintains rape as the recognized method of propagation and would render my life a forfeit if I followed my native impulse and slew a dozen rapists a day. But they believe that they are doing right. It is the general welfare which overrides the welfare of the individual woman.

I think the world is well stocked with sympathy. I see much expense at funerals; a wonderful amount of patriotism, ready to war for fixed ideas; the Red Cross society is liberally supported; even money-lenders are sincerely quick to relieve their victims; and an anaesthetic bullet has been invented.

As for men, or men, animals, and plants, being an organism, I do not need to discuss that. I should have to inquire as to the specific and individual characteristics of the organism. The idea is doubtless a relief from the mechanical idea of political institutions. We have the phenomena of life before us, and can judge of them as they present themselves. If I am a molecule or anything else in an organism, that is all right. I am what I am. And if old theology was a reflection of man, then surely Egoism is the fulfillment of the world’s travail, for God is pictured as acting spontaneously, without a thought of duty, or pressure

against his inclinations, and yet the source of all good. But if it is suggested by the moralist that I shall waive anything upon being convicted of being part of an organism, my stubborn personality may defeat the scheme, as Egoistic anti-prohibitionists defeat prohibitory laws which lack only the consent of victims. I shall not waive anything, and yet I shall be as serene and content to be a molecule, if I am one, as to be anything else, even a grain of iron tonic for the organism, or the grain of strychnine that sends it to kingdom come, or a flea upon a dog (the flea and the dog being parts of the same organism?)

Mr. Kelly's sketch of morals does not effectively antagonize Egoism, because sympathy for persons is Egoistic when it is natural. I do not attack that feeling as superstitious, and I do not attack any feeling upon the ground that the person cannot account for it. I attack as superstitious what is called **moral obligation**, the oppressive sense of duty, a trace of which is conveyed in Mr. Kelly's words, "this feeling that one should so act." Genuine personal sympathy is spontaneous. It is possible that Mr. Kelly's is wholly so. In places he writes somewhat like an Egoist of fine sentiment, but his entire misapprehension about Egoism, as repeatedly explained, goes further than his particular use of the words "should" and "ought" and his talk about morality to show that he cannot be an Egoist. For, had he been an Egoist, he would have "caught on" to some of the numerous statements by Stirner or myself which would show him that Egoism, or selfhood, has nothing in the world to do with broad or narrow caricatures upon it. If a man is small or large in capacity or range of capacities, yet if he owns himself and is awed by no command, bewitched by no fixed idea or superstition, but does everything with a sense that his acts are his own genuine, personal, sovereign choice,—under whatever pressure of material circumstances and necessary yielding thereto,—then the man is an Egoist, or one conscious that he is a genuine Ego, an individual, a free man according substantially to Proudhon's definition of a free man, printed as a motto in *Liberty* last year. If the moralists, like the theological religionists, are so skeptical about personal character as to have no confidence in its producing good behavior, the Egoist will only say this,—that he discovers in himself nothing which he can call moral obligation. You may therefore observe his acts if you care to do so, and perhaps you will discover that what you vainly attributed to the restraint of moral obligation is the spontaneous nature of yourself, but debased with the alloy of scepticism as to your own personal character. In this view, what becomes of the proposed just means between Egoism and Altruism? It is, of course, the result of a ridiculous perversion of terms. In the first place Egoism was degraded together with human nature, its subject, to the greater glory of God. Then, Egoism having been assigned the popular meaning which implies that a man without an infusion of divine grace or moral efficacy will simply grub to satisfy hunger and vanity, Altruism was invented to mean doing acts to benefit others. There are no Egoists who do not do many acts to help others. Generosity is perfectly Egoistic. There is

no quality so distinctively so, in contrast with dutiful moralism. It is a flower of character, without the slightest taint or smut of moral police forces in the forum of consciousness. Popular instinct and common sense recognize this fact even in the narrowest phase of individuality, — egotism. People flatter a man's vanity, — i. e., rouse his self-appreciation,—when they want to profit by his generosity. Vanity is a mortal foe to reverence.

The Egoist acts to gratify himself and not from a foreign motive. But are all acts Egoistic? All acts of unadulterated Egos are so. We cannot ignore the plain fact that men succumb to the domination of ideas. They are from infancy taught to believe and to practice and obey, and to regard Egoism as the worst of all faults, and reverence, dutifulness toward something or other, as necessary; some standard outside of their own tastes and desires as authoritative and guiding; some things as sacred, not to be touched or brought into question. This is religion, as diluted, moral obligation; and it is so proved by the dread that everything will go wrong if men have only their own desires and intelligence as factors determining their conduct, or liberty and intelligence, as Proudhon has defined them. We call the anti-Egoistic influence fixed ideas, or spiritual domination. We say that we will possess ideas, but they shall not possess us. But for the surrender to fixed ideas and the drilling and teaching which maintain their dominion, the State and the Church would be only so many men, their sacredness gone. How long would their power endure against the surprise, ridicule, indifference, or aversion of a mass of Egoists? Superstition is a plant which grows from any bit of root left in the ground. If there is a single thing in which the individual shrinks from pursuing that in which he is most interested, or if he submits to control by ideas which have not come in the way that makes them part of himself, he is undone, precisely as, if any branch of government is established, it may bring back the whole apparatus of despotism. Freethinkers as to theology have changed masters when they have become moralists or remained patriots. Charles Bradlaugh wrote in his paper that the shores of England seemed to him more sacred than any others. To the Egoist there is nothing sacred. But, when Bradlaugh took an oath, and stated that his views were too well known for there to be any misunderstanding about it, he was in line with the Egoistic method of reducing bigotry: teaching the bigots that cobwebs do not bind real persons.

The secularists had their chance when their term was new, and they started officially non-political and with an intention to treat theology simply as a topic for individual expressions. Secularism itself was put forward as holding nothing sacred. But in a short time its founder, G. J. Holyoake, recanted by declaring that the secular is sacred in its influence on life and character. After that it could not be Egoistic, and for want of Egoistic affirmation it missed advancing to Anarchism, and reverted to an anti-theological protest,— the old formula of wailing "rights of conscience."

To those who believe that Liberty will produce a better order than authority I would suggest a reconsideration if they have condemned Egoism. It is certain that whatever gets to the form of desire must be gratified or repressed. The habit of repressing certain desires for personal motives, wisdom, will be much more valuable to the individual than the habit of repressing them from a sense of cosmic duty. Whoever has outgrown that enslaving idea and found that the sun is not blotted out of his sky has gained an experience which he would not relinquish for all the treasures of other men. Egoism is the solid base of Anarchism and of atheism. Though it does not necessarily render each Egoist agreeable to all other Egoists, it destroys the awe, reverence, and obedience upon which all despotisms thrive.

It is difficult to imagine all men as knowing what are the needs of all other men in taste and sympathy. It is less difficult to imagine all men as having become Egoists. Then, with the general diffusion of economic science rendering any overreaching conduct impossible in either case, Egoism seems to offer the advantage that it affords no leverage for any disposition which may arise to meddle with or exploit tastes and sympathies; while it utterly extirpates the moral craze or fanatical motive.

Let us suppose all men Egoists. How would the pope persuade people to support him? How would Bismarck persuade Germans that they have individual interest in holding Alsace? How would Lord Salisbury persuade Englishmen that they have an interest in holding Ireland? How would Grover Cleveland persuade us to support him and coerce the Mormons? Yet natural sympathy would give all the aid required by any Mormon woman who wanted to leave her husband. In fact, if she were an Egoist, she could be restrained only by physical force; but we know that neither compulsion nor any indoctrination in moral duty is necessary to cause natural affection. Egoism therefore points to a general letting alone, and to the consequent growth of people fitted by environment to live and let live. In this light the ridiculous dispute as to whether duality or variety in love is the better plan is simply referred to natural inclinations. The fittest will survive: an axiom which bespeaks the supremacy of material conditions, unconscious forces in part and other forces of which there is no consciousness in me. It means that that will survive which can survive. It does not mean that that which is judged most moral will survive. A hardy negro sailor would survive where Herbert Spencer would be drowned. The Egoists will survive in the long run, as they carry no useless baggage and keep their eyes open. They seek to disprove all things which they are able to disprove by scrutiny and shaking, and consequently they get rid of those unsound combinations among which unsound men are trying to survive. By getting at the unshakable the Egoist will attain the greatest simplicity of formula and the most solid basis for himself to be a survivor. Fittest for what? and how fit? For survival, and by ability to survive.

The hyena stalk the babe. The fittest (subject) survives (predicate); or the survivor (subject) is called the fittest (predicate) without other idea or evidence of fitness. The ideal is that which is desired. Moralists ignore the potency of things in relation to produce desired results by generating personal desire to the point of efficient action.

The manners that best serve men, from any point of view, can be determined only according to the character of the men concerned. For equitable commerce I need men of understanding and purpose, and first of all I need real men. Then I can hope that economic science will be appreciated. As for the Egoists who prey upon the masses, they do so because the masses are exploitable material, easily beguiled, filled with spiritual ideas, and entertained with moral doctrines.

The spiritual man is mad. We can do nothing with men who are not substantially whole men. Mr. Kelly's idea that "society" may be diseased suggests for me the analogy of minds diseased. At least they are perverted, stuffed with bigotry, and notions of fate, charms, luck, national glory, party, duty, self-sacrifice, belief in their own tendency to wickedness, therefore of the need of restraint. They are indoctrinated, not educated; taught to believe and to distrust their own nature even by moralists who do not suspect that moralism is in degree the same skepticism as religious faith. For education we need to begin with this: Be yourself. I affirm, not as a reason, but as a result, behavior satisfactory to others in a greater degree than from any moral system. I affirm that selfishness is the law of nature (to use a convenient expression generalizing facts, not meaning a law to be obeyed) and that minds are poisoned, debauched, deflected, and subjugated, that men are rendered insane, when they give their consent to place their mental center of gravity outside of themselves; then they are not genuine individuals. The attraction of the outer world is for the Ego as a complete person acting without sense of pressure or dictation. For results, if you say that some Egos are narrow and "selfish," I say I prefer them as narrow Egos rather than take the chances of what may happen should they acquire a "sense of duty" and become patriots, moralists, or exponents of any fixed idea whatever. Egoism is sanity. Non-Egoism is insanity.

Egoistic interest includes "all that may become a man." Egoistic prudence is calculation as to the means of satisfying a desire or avoiding an undesired issue. It regards the good of another when I really desire that good. I watch the rising of good-will in myself and permit no idea to become my master. Ideas are my furniture, my possession. Feelings shall not be imparted to me; but they may be aroused. Egoistic self-denial will now be clear. Egoistic beneficence exists now. Egoistic justice and practical duty will be constituted in and by the presence of Egos and their mutual requirements. In dealing with insane people we cannot do any other justice than to do the best we can. The

Ego who does not feel any sentiment for company can "flock by himself," but when dealing with other Egos, he will find an adjustment established in all transactions upon the basis of the utter impossibility of any one who may be deficient as compared with others in sentiment, getting what he does not earn.

What boots it to preach ideas of Right and Wrong as motives? If you find believers, they are stuffed with your idea, and have no root in themselves. But if you dispel fixed ideas and cultivate persons, you will have the sentiments and actions natural to real and unadulterated persons. There may be much seeming self-sacrifice, but, if it is made with pleasure, it is not self-sacrifice. If it is not made with personal satisfaction, it is insanity; it is real self-sacrifice. There is no just mean about the matter. If there is an exact relation between myself and the rest of men, it will, I am sure, find its solution in my acting as a sovereign individual. I shall discover whether they are such or not, and treat them accordingly. But thus I act at all events, and kindly to the weak. Let nature use me, if she will and can; I can at least say that she shall use me only on condition that her organic purposes are effected by organic processes, and that my conscious will and satisfaction is the stamp of genuineness upon her processes so far as I am concerned. Digestion and assimilation, please: no hypodermic injections of spiritual powers. What is that power which would conscript me, or come in, not at the door, but another way, climbing over the wall? It is a thief and a robber.

If without restraint I am dangerous in act, then put physical restraint upon me. That is your affair. If murder is the tendency of a mind unawed, the social sanction will want an ecclesiastical despotism. If conscience means simply sentiment, not the conscience which does make cowards of all victims of spiritual hallucinations, I have nothing here to say of conscience. The tendency to murder is commonly asserted against Anarchy by all advocates of government. We reply as Anarchists that governments murder their millions, and so the dozen murders which might occur under Anarchism in a year would not seem to be much of an argument. I can leave the matter there in the same terms for Egoism, substituting spiritual ideas—i. e., fixed ideas—for government. And as government reposes upon the fixity of idea of the people regarding the need of government, it is essentially dependent upon the continuance of the fixed idea. Egoism dissolves, not one fixed idea merely, but the habit and faith of fixity, therefore all, and furnishes the condition for the final eradication of all political domination; for it will not be thought that a dominion of military power would be possible without a glamor of belief or fixed idea in the people. So long, however, as moralists have influence to persuade men that they cannot and ought not to trust themselves as natural sovereigns obeying only the promptings of their own instincts, judgment, and natural sentiments, they will persuade them to a habit of deferring to doctrines of right and wrong, ideal, fantastic, utterly subversive

of spontaneous action, and tending to continue and renew the influence of teachers and expounders; and these will have opportunity to build up hierarchies and governments. The treacherous enemy in the citadel is the fixed idea. Until the fixity is dissolved, the victim will demand only reforms and obtain only changes of masters.

Of course selfhood asserts itself against the physical tyranny of other persons, whether singly or aggregated, in family, tribe, clan, nation; but self-ownership, so far as outward appearances are concerned, is largely admitted, and would follow as a result, if subjection were not secured by means of ideas. The power of the government to collect taxes; that of landlords to collect rent and hold open land, — would be exhausted and would utterly fail if it had not consent in the victims generally either directly to these exactions or to the system of which they are parts. We take liberty when we no longer feel bound. The bondage of idea is now the great bondage. In matters already viewed Egoistically, such as drinking, sexual intercourse, gain, authority is practically defeated. Authority, whether of Egoists or fanatics, can be overthrown only by Egoism. The harlot, the gambler, the usurer, the libertine, persist in their individual course because they are not amenable to authoritative control except by actual, constant watching, and this would be too expensive. Their example teaches passive resistance, but passive resistance can come only when, as in these cases, the idea of duty to obey is removed. Egoism dispels it altogether, and exhibits the reality, Ego. Religion and moralism say that we may have passions, but we must not allow our passions to enslave us. The Egoist extends the suggestion to include ideas. He has ideas, but he remains the master of them, fully aware that any of them might grow upon him and enslave him, if permitted, such is the tendency to give to airy nothings a local habitation and fortify it against its owner. Moralism may say we ought to be free because that is best for the totality. The Egoist says, to himself at least, "I am the master of myself." Then he acts of course according to his natural character under the circumstances in which he may be placed. The Egoist cannot be bound, except in physical bonds, because there are no others. With the moralist, the stone is around the fruit to hold it in. With the Egoist, all the precious thoughts which are supposed by the moralists to create obligations are possessions which create desires; and personality cannot lead to all sorts of contradictory desires. No moral law is needed to prevent a nightingale from adopting the habits of a raven. The Egoist realizes that he is truly an animal, and that ideas have just as much existence as language, no more, — that is, they are processes. All the ideas he has he will use as he sees fit. If of a speculative intellectual turn, the Egoist cannot doubt that there is the greatest good for all in Egoism, and, as he can find satisfaction in proving it, he may undertake to do so.

Anarchism is the direct outgrowth of the natural fact of Egoism directed against the visible enemy sustained upon the weakness of invaded and debauched personality. The new creation, in effect, is a banishment of unreal fascinations. Let there be men, and where there are men, whole men.

—Tak Kak

Historical Background: Born of wealthy parents in Manchester, England in June, 1845, James L. Walker received an excellent education in England, France and Germany; well versed in dead languages, he was fluent in half a dozen modern tongues. A logician and linguist by academic training, he began working as a reporter for the London Times after his graduation. Subsequent to his arrival in the United States he became an associate editor at the Chicago Times, and later did editorial work for the San Antonio Herald, the San Antonio Express, the Austin Statesman, and most notably, the Galveston-Dallas News. During this time he also authored books on stenography, chemistry, medicine, and civil engineering.

His innovative work in the field of anarchist thought began in Chicago where he published an anti-theological paper. He later contributed articles on “conscience” to *Lucifer*—whose editor, Moses Harman, had introduced him to anarchism. It was from a series of articles in *Egoism*, published in Oakland and San Francisco, California from 1890-1898 by Georgia and Henry Replogle, that much of Walker’s highly-recommended short book *The Philosophy of Egoism* was drawn (the book was published posthumously in Denver by Walker’s wife Katherine, a year after Walker’s death).

But of all of his written works, Walker is perhaps best known for his articles in Benjamin R. Tucker’s periodical of philosophical anarchism, *Liberty*. Beginning in 1886, using the nom de plume “Tak Kak”, Walker made known to *Liberty*’s readership the foundations of egoist self-theory. The essay reprinted above was Walker’s masterstroke/checkmate maneuver against his buffoon-like foil, John F. Kelly, in relation to a long-running debate concerning the place of “selfishness” in anarchist thought (a debate which ultimately divided *Liberty*’s readership into two camps: “natural rights” advocates and amoralist). Despite the dated context of the essay, we trust that intelligent and critical readers will have no trouble recognizing the timeless saliency of Walker’s ideas.

Egoism

by L. Wastiaux

(translated by Alejandro de Acosta)

*from ego, I;
the suffix ism designates the tendency*

The tendency to consider everything in relation to oneself. Current opinion: vice of one who relates everything to himself, due to an imperfection of the “heart” and the intelligence. It is opposed to altruism, sacrifice, selflessness, all virtues, and “hearts” in the right place (see Altruism.)

Each of us only has one brain and uses it as best he can to discover a rule for his conduct. Whatever this rule may be, it is evident that it has its origin in the thinking subject: there is no man outside himself. The patriot defends the country he believes his own; the exploiter, the status quo from which he profits; the individualist intends to preserve his little self, quarrels among States not being “his affair”; the artist feels “something” that brings him to express himself... they all act out of a need to act, to endure: out of egoism. However, the place publicly assigned to egoism shows a great imprudence, or an unpardonable cynicism. We want to be fooled, even consciously; on the village square, it is absolutely necessary for the charlatan to say that he has no other goal than to relieve poor humanity; no one is fooled, and yet, skipping over this formality of hypocrisy would come at a great cost. The tremendous progress of modern science has barely touched the prostrate mobs; in the interested wait for their salvation, they allow themselves to be relived of all right to exist. It is therefore not a question of partisans or adversaries of egoism; altruism is nothing but the disguise worn by the will to live, the instinct for self-preservation, to appear acceptable in a society held together by hypocrisy: man, who is a wolf for man, always finds it advantageous to play shepherd. So many people profit from the exploitation of their “noble feelings” and those of their fellows that it seems sacrilegious to cast them into doubt; and, since dupes generally prefer their innocent ignorance to the hassle of struggle, the rule of words seems far from its end. The worst of it is that heredity and adaptation to the environment seem to have embedded certain metaphysical notions so deeply into the human being that it is common to see educated and intelligent people making great efforts to rehabilitate morality, only because the alternative seems to them so horrible. And if those that profit from altruism have forged a conception of the destined to reinforce their position, their victims have been equally conscientious, and, to avert their downfall, have manufactured moralities and theologies by the dozens, each rivaling the other

in harassing measures and subtleties. This imbroglio, this Chinese box puzzle capable of making the job of being a “thinker” so disgusting, made Nietzsche say: “First of all we hang the moralists!”

Yet the reality is too clear for charlatanism to make it abdicate its rights. We have to retrace the history of philosophy to give an idea of these millenarian struggles. Ancient Greece had Aristippus as its protagonist of pleasure; his theories, enlarged and modified, were brilliantly expounded by Epicurus (432-270 BCE) (*La morale d'Epicure*, (Alcan), J.-M. Guyau.) The vigor of Epicurus' thought confounds us with admiration, and it is not without melancholy that we measure the twenty-three centuries that separate us from him, when we see how few, even in our days, are those who have profited from his comforting wisdom. His system was mainly attacked by the Stoics, for virtue had no place in it; if he did what we by convention call “good”, it was because he wanted to; if he was sober, it was to conserve his health, and also to be more free, having fewer needs. Even his adversaries were compelled to admire him, and took him up many times as an example: we can see that not all egoists are of the caliber of La Bruyère's—he makes his a boor to render him despicable: “... Juice and sauces drip from his chin and beard; he licks his teeth, and continues to eat!” (*Characters*)

Erasmus, Montaigne, and Pascal all considered the morality of happiness-egoism, epicureanism—as the only one that could be opposed to the Christian morality of “abnegation”. La Rochefoucauld (1613-1683) recognized (with some regret, however) that egoism is everything: “Virtues are lost in interest as rivers are lost in the sea” (Maxims). With great effort, Gassendi reconstructed the system of Epicurus; Spinoza tried to bring together the two opposed theories, but soon enough, thanks to Hobbes, Locke, Hume, and Adam Smith, the egoist theory returned to a place of honor. This resurrection, thanks to Helevétius above all, was greatly influential in the French Revolution. Closer to us, it is once again egoism—personal interest—that, with Bentham, Stuart Mill, and Spencer, is considered by English Philosophy to be the sole lever that moves the human. Even though socialism, syndicalism, and anarchism are far from expressing themselves with the logic and clarity one might wish for, too often taking on the nebulous terminology of Christian metaphysics, they have no other foundation than individual or collective egoism.

To Live is the Primary drive of the human being, the first and last motive of all its vital manifestations. To deny egoism is to deny life. There are no altruists; the word “altruism” is a synonym of egoism, and not its antonym.

John Henry Mackay

As an aside, let us note the line of demarcation—if there is a line—between anarcho-communists and individualist anarchists. The latter do not have faith in the future (as the former do) to “inspire” each and everyone to an egoism in line with the general interest. J.-M. Guyau tries to reconcile individual and society: “Life can only be maintained on condition of spreading itself out,” he says. “There is a certain generosity which is inseparable from existence, and without which we die.” Need for generosity... egoist altruism (*A Sketch of a Morality Without Obligation or Sanction*; Alcan).

Helped along by science, philosophy would have had an easy time opening eyes, if we did not prefer images to reality. We know that this unchangeability of stupidity provoked violent reactions, such as that of Max Stirner (1806-1856), and that of Nietzsche (1844-1900).

How was one able so to transform these instincts that man thought valuable that which was directed against his self? When he sacrificed his self to another self. Oh the psychological wretchedness and mendaciousness that has hitherto laid down the law in the church and in church-infected philosophy!

What task will I take up in this book? It will also be to “improve” humanity, but in another, opposed sense: I want to deliver it from morality and above all moralists—from having had in its conscience the most dangerous ignorance... Recovery of human egoism!

The Will to Power

A crusade to recover egoism? Yes, it is urgent; only Epicurean therapy will rid us of contemporary incoherence and hypocrisy. The most advanced milieus are infested with Christianity; self-sacrifice, that species of egoism accidentally useful to others, remains the virtue par excellence; we forget that “duty” is relative to the aim that one sets for oneself, and that, renouncing the aim, one frees oneself at once of all obligation. I make propaganda because the misery and stupidity around me weigh on, menace, and disfigure my life; I do not drink alcohol... because it destroys intelligence! Material pleasures for some, “refinement” for others; to each his own pleasure...

To lead the troublemakers to share one’s ambitions, to lead them to resolutions in line with one’s designs: this is called “making propaganda”. Does the crown love the dependence that saves it from responsibility? The anarchist loves freedom, the point where, despite the repugnancy of so doing, he often tries to incite others to a liberatory effort; he makes allies of his victims! Egoism? Altruism?—“First of all we hang the Moralists!”

To destroy the hypocrisy that cements it,—to show the interested motives behind every action—maybe that is to irreparably disaggregate society. But so what? Whatever Le Dantec says, this global Malthusianism is better

than “badly designed” societies. After having destroyed the logical value of metaphysical notions—God, Right, Law, etc.—simply by explaining them, this intellectual—Fear of the unknown? Unconscious vertigo?—this scholar justifies a “necessary hypocrisy” for the maintenance of society, with all its consequences. (*L'Egoïsme*, Flammarion). Buy why go on if the evil is without remedy?

Nothing is less certain than that cynicism—egoism without a mask—will destroy society. It can barely spread there, only by a slow process, and who knows if society will not adapt in the long run. Life has time; its forms are innumerable and unforeseeable: let it accomplish its destinies by itself... As for us, let us concern ourselves with our own; the “Future” will not thereby lose anything; the living enjoying their life—is that not a magnificent object lesson for future generations?

from The Anarchist Encyclopedia

Egoism's Purpose

By H.P. and Georgia Replogle

Egoism's purpose is to make the Ego—the I, master, rather than the slave of his environment. To impel him to the self-entertaining sufficiency for his psychological cravings which places their gratification ever farther from the mercy of other's whims. To quicken him into full understanding and appreciation of his biological prerogatives, and to press him to their prompt assertion and defense. And, finally, to gain general recognition for a standard of Ethics and Social Polity based on a logical extension of biological order into the social realm.

Such biological order becomes protrudingly obvious when we analyze the physical basis of psychical projection, and note that an Ego is the sum total of consciousness manifested by an organism physiologically separate from others of any species; that this consciousness is impossible without setting everything second to itself; that, hence, for the Ego to contemplate ultimate reference to anything but its own satisfaction must be as impossible as it is for consciousness to exist without positing itself prior to the objects it is conscious of; that therefore Self-Interest is psychologically as legitimate as physiological separation is imperative by the organic processes that bring it into existence, and that each one lives, or suicides, exactly in the degree that they conform to this absolute order of their being.

Society is nothing other than an aggregation of such Egos. One of these can be nothing to another except as he detracts from or adds to that others happiness. On this is based the concept of the social compromise known as equal justice. The resistance of each individual determines what is expedient as such compromise, and as that resistance is necessarily approximately equal, such approximate equality is the only enduring terms of social compact.

It follows, then, that the basic principle of consistent Social Polity is not a relation of the Majority with the Individual or of the Individual with the Majority as practiced in Majority Rule, but of Individual with Individual. This system of "social administration" would annihilate political meddling, by destroying it as an industry from which men may gain an easy livelihood, and would inaugurate the era of real sovereignty—Liberty with Responsibility.

Ethically, the Egoist knows no motive of anybody's except the direct or ultimate satisfaction of the Ego, and recognizes no "duty" to anything nor anybody by anybody. Thus conceding duty to no one, he openly posits a basis for action about which there can be no misunderstanding and which will place every person squarely on the merit of his/her probable interests, divested of the opportunity to deceive through other pretensions, as under the dominance of Altruistic idealism.

He or She may perform apparently Altruistic conduct to secure self-satisfactions that are to be had in no cheaper way and still be working Egoistically, for all satisfaction is Egoistic. Egoistic conduct therefore makes for general happiness, for just as the Egos are happiest happiness is general.

Politically, the consistent Egoist can sanction no government of man by man. He is, in short, an Anarchist—an Egoistic Anarchist, and the literature of Egoistic Anarchism alone can answer the questions that acquaint with the only invulnerable political philosophy.

—from *Egoism*, September 1897

The World I Am

by A. G. Wagner

The different and several worlds I have created have each in their turn wobbled, deteriorated and been discarded. All proved rotten at the core.

Observation and experience shows that unless I put myself into that which I do, construct, or build, the result—the thing in itself—is of but mediocre quality and does not endure.

“The world is my mental conception,” says Schopenhauer, which indicates that it is created by man and of himself. The Self, the I AM, the ego, appears as the most dependable nucleus from which to create anything.

As center of intelligence and awareness, the human manifestation of Life draws to itself all that impinges; consuming it, and by assimilation, becoming all. This transitory flesh and blood ego is, of course, mutable, but it is about the nearest to a reality that we may know.

A tree and all plants draw from environments precisely that which is needed for their developmental unfoldment. Similarly, a man absorbs such elements as suit him and from which he creates what he may or must, his OWN, which is under his control and which he readily can dissolve again.

Conscientiously and intelligently-willed creations, embodying the living ego, from which it sprang, are not only the most tenable foundations upon which to base one’s affairs, but are also evidence of the “gods” among us here and now.

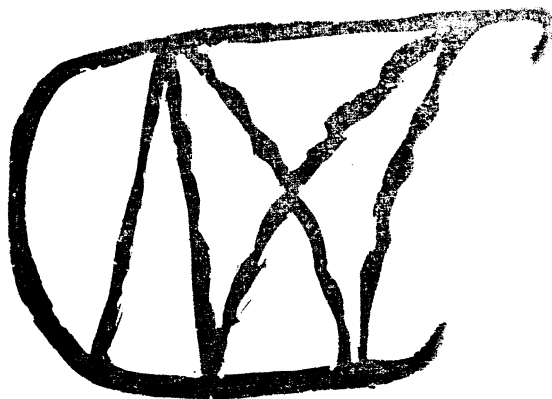
Of the many paradoxes that abound in life, it has of late finally become thinkable that a person is both creator and the created together. Being these, all hells of separateness and condemnation are dispelled—they are not of him. Accepting all, excluding naught; ego-conscious man has within him poise, serenity and power over all he includes—i.e., his OWN.

Yes, being both cause and effect, the enlightened egoist, in his larger zone, is emancipated from ordinary spooky obsessions and approaches “Nirvana”. Entering in, understanding and living all a human is capable of, he is at One, inseparably connected with the cosmic scheme, in tune with sublimist harmony.

—from *EGO*, number 4, April 1921

This pamphlet explores the filaments between anarchy and conscious egoism (a connection that's as old as anarchism itself) through a series of five essays that harken back to a time when anarchism was a defiant, break-down-the-walls impulse unconcerned with political correctness or the denial of Self.

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